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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7287
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001465

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IESC MEETING MAY 9, 2008

Classified By: Economic Counselor Todd Schwartz for reasons 1.4 (a,d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In place of an absent PM Maliki, National Security Advisory Mowaffuk Rubaie chaired the 9 May 2008 Iraqi Executive Steering Committee (IESC) in support of Fardh Al Qanoon (FaQ) the Baghdad Security Plan). The PM mandated the meeting be conducted with limited attendance, featured discussions of the ongoing problematic state of services in Sadr City and intensive discussions about Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs) including recent protests outside the Iraqi Embassy in Tehran. End Summary.

Limited attendance) Chalabi Out

¶2. (C) NSA Rubaie announced PM Maliki has instructed that the number of attendees to the IESC be restricted with the goal of improving the strategic discussion of the meeting. Notable Iraqis who will no longer be invited to the IESC include Services Committee Chair Ahmed Chalabi and members of the Media Committee, including Civilian Spokesman Tahseen Sheikly and Military Spokesman Qassim Atta. (Comment: Post IESC discussions with Rubaie indicate the PM is pleased with Sheikly's media efforts. It is unknown why the PM decided to disinvite Chalabi or what effect this will have on his Services Committee. End Comment).

¶3. (C) In this as well as future IESC meetings, Coalition attendance was limited to 4 persons. In attendance were Ambassador Crocker, Michael Baumgartner (JSPA), Deputy Commanding General Cooper and Major General Zamzow (StratEff). (Comment: Previously approximately twenty-two Coalition personnel typically attended the IESC. While the reduced Coalition presence will have a negative impact on our ability to track and coordinate service issues related to FaQ, the PMs decision to reduce our attendance can also be viewed as a positive sign of the GoI increasingly asserting its sovereignty. End Comment).

Sadr City Education

¶4. (C) With neither the Minister of Education nor the Mayor in attendance, the Governor provided a brief update informing that many of the schools in Sadr City remain closed. Given the Minister of Education's absence, the planned briefing on alternative sites for year end exams was not given.

Sadr City Rations

¶5. (C) The Minister of Trade claimed that although there was a shortage of milk, 95% of the May ration has been distributed. The Minister also stated that large quantities of additional supplies are currently in Umm Qasr Port and will be brought to Baghdad in the near future. The Governor disputed the figure, saying many people have still not received their rations. The Minister stated that a continued

inability to access the food quality testing laboratory in Sadr City hampers ration distribution. The Minister dismissed calls from Ministry of Oil Sharistani to distribute the rations without testing, stating that doing so will inevitably mean that some people will receive spoiled food and the GoI will then be accused of poisoning them.

Sadr City Services

¶ 6. (C) The Governor stated that services in areas controlled by Jayesh Al Mahdi Special Groups (JAM SG) are poor, but services in areas controlled by the GoI are non-existent. The Governor indicated this was due to JAM SG threats and intimidation, keeping municipal employees from going to work.

(Comment: Many employees are refusing to work because of their Sadrist or JAM affiliation. They know their refusal to work in this area undermines the GoI's efforts at providing services there. End Comment.)

¶ 7. (C) Baghdad Commander General Aboud objected strongly to this depiction, stating he personally had seen rubble being removed. Aboud further stated those areas his forces have cleared are safe and that the BOC had worked to limit the average wait at check points to 30 minutes. (Comment: Aboud may have witnessed cleaning crews who had received premium pay from MND-B CERP funding. Municipal employees receive their salaries even if they refuse to work in non-secure areas; thus many workers prefer to receive their Amanat salary and then receive a bonus salary by being hired on a CERP trash pick-up program. End Comment.)

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¶ 8. (C) General Aboud also complained that the Ministries have failed to send representatives to the Civilian Military Operations Command Post (CMOC) that has been established in Sadr City. Aboud said the failure to do so was inhibiting coordination and left the BOC unable to answer the concerns of citizens who were coming to the CMOC for information.

Sadr City Hospitals

¶ 9. (C) The Governor called for a small group to visit the Umm Ali Hospital and prepare a report on its status and determine the actual events regarding a Coalition air strike near the hospital several days prior. Deputy Commanding General Cooper rejected a request from Rubaie to provide transport to the hospital, stating that Coalition personnel that deep in Sadr City would draw attacks from JAM SG.

Sadr City Fuel

¶ 10. (C) Minister of Oil Sharistani again sounded a positive note about the overall stocks of refined fuel in Iraq, saying they are at their highest levels since 2003. Sharistani said his Ministry was successfully delivering fuel products directly to citizens in Sadr City, bypassing local councils.

Sadr City Electricity

¶ 11. (C) Minister of Electricity Kareem said his efforts to distribute extra power to Sadr City had resulted in good availability there, but a slight decrease in the rest of Baghdad. However, Minister Kareem did sound concern over the fact that a large percentage of his employees are from Sadr City; their difficulty in commuting to work to other areas of the city was causing problems at power stations.

Preparation for Sadr City IDPs

¶12. (C) The Minister of Immigration and Displaced Persons said an emergency camp capable of housing 1000 families has been set up in the event of residents fleeing Sadr City from expected future ISF operations. The Minister also noted he was receiving assistance from the Iraqi Red Crescent which has ready 140,000 emergency food rations and 15,000 tents. The Minister of Defense stated that he did not expect future Sadr City security operations to create a large number of IDPs.

Iran and Electricity

¶13. (C) Minister of Electricity of Kareem stated Iran had reduced electricity exports by 220 MW over the past five days. The Minister said there was no plausible technical reason for the reduction and that he had sent a delegation to Iran earlier in the day to discuss the issue. Kareem expressed frustrations with Iran stating that they had ignored his previous requests for information for over a week.

Iran and Iraq Embassy Protests

¶14. (S) Minister of Foreign Affairs Zebari said the Government of Iran had organized civilian protests at the Iraqi Embassy in Tehran due to Iraq's recent reconfirmation of its concurrence with the Arab leagues position regarding the three disputed UAE islands occupied by Iran. Zebari said he had warned the Iranian Ambassador that if the protests did not stop quickly that Iran would risk similar protest by Iraqis in Baghdad. Zebari stated he expected relations with Iran to worsen in coming weeks and months and sounded concern about recent events involving Hezbollah in Lebanon. Minister of Oil Sharistani concurred that relations with Iran were likely to worsen and stated he had increased fuel stockpiles in expectation of a reduced amount of supply provided by Iran.

Kuwait and Diesel Imports

¶15. (C) Minister of Oil Sharistani sounded a pessimistic note over the failure of a Kuwait company to deliver an agreed to

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2.5 M l/d in diesel imports for electricity distribution. Sharistani noted that Iraq faced the same issue last year and that, in his view, the Kuwaitis had no intention of helping Iraq. Sharistani again asked for US Embassy assistance in the matter. (Comment: Iraq is currently importing an average of just over 1 M l/d in Diesel. Despite this, Sharistani clearly enjoyed the "I-told-you-so" moment as he recounted his previous year's opposition to paying \$9 million in demurrage charges to the Kuwait company in the attempt to resolve last year's diesel dispute. End Comment.)

¶16. (C) The Ministry of Electricity stated it was difficult to import fuel products by sea due to the poor state of the Umm Qasr port and that an effort to increase supplies via Jordan and Turkey must be made. However, the Minister noted the distances involved would make the fuel delivery more expensive than those via Kuwait. Returning to a regular theme, Minister of Oil Sharistani stated that pipeline security from Bayji to Baghdad is a must if Iraq's fuel situation is to be further improved.

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